

U.S. Naval Hospital, Administration Building (Bldg. No. 1)
Park Boulevard, Balboa Park
San Diego
San Diego County
California

HABS No. CA-1548-A

HABS
CAL,
37-SANDI,
27-A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American buildings Survey
National Park Service
Western Region
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California 94102

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
U.S. NAVAL HOSPITAL,
[ADMINISTRATION BUILDING (BUILDING 1)]
at the
U.S. Naval Hospital
San Diego, California

HABS No. CA-1548 A
Title Sheet

Location: U.S. Naval Hospital Reservation
Stitt Avenue running south from Park Boulevard in Balboa Park
City and County of San Diego, California, 92134
USGS Point Loma 1975 Quadrangle
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 11.486200.3620400.

Owner and
Occupant: Built in 1920 for the United States Navy.

Present Use: Administration building for a hospital serving Navy, Marine
Corps, and Coast Guard personnel, retirees, and dependants.

Statement of
Significant: THE ARCHITECTURAL/HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ADMINISTRATION
BUILDING

The buildings of the original U.S. Naval Hospital in San Diego, considered as a landscaped ensemble, form a regionally significant work of historical architecture. The group is noteworthy for its harmonious architectural styling, unified planning, and spectacular siting.

The Administration Building, with its two Mission-style towers, is the most prominent building of the group and was intended to express the group's architectural theme. The Administration Building is a contributing structure in the group, but is not individually significant.

Historians: William Rutledge, employee of the Western Division office of the Naval Facilities Engineering Command (successor to the Navy's Bureau of Yards and Docks), and Donald Ferris, AIA, San Diego, under contract to the Navy.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: One of six buildings under construction from Nov. 11, 1920, to Mar. 26, 1922. (Date of plans Sept. 15, 1920.)
2. Architect: Staff architects of the U.S. Navy Bureau of Yards and Docks, Washington D.C.. Elevation drawing of Sept. 16, 1920 was signed W.P., probably William Partridge. Cross-section drawing was signed W.P. and H.C.S., implying H.C.S. was a structural designer. Floor plan drawing signed H.C.S. and E.G.L., probably a lower-ranking designer in the Bureau. The plot plan for the first five buildings, drawing #91014 titled the Hospital Group, was signed W.P.

The plan and elevation drawings were revised February 1921, during the course of construction, by M.S.M.

Please see accompanying narrative report for the discussion titled "Credits for Designing the Hospital".

3. Construction contractors: The U.S. Navy put the plans out for bids from private construction firms in 1920. The advertisement read:

SEALED PROPOSALS, endorsed "Proposals for Hospital Buildings, Specification No. 4300," will be received at the Bureau of Yards and Docks, Navy Department, Washington, D.C., until 2 o'clock p.m., on October 13, 1920, and at the office of the Public Works Officer, U.S.N., Timken Building, San Diego, Calif., until 11 o'clock a.m., on the same date, and then and there publicly opened, for six hospital buildings at the Naval Base, San Diego, Calif. The construction will be reinforced concrete framing throughout, except roof; concrete footings; hollow terra cotta fire walls, plastered interior and stuccoed exterior, hollow terra cotta and wood stud partitions, with metal lath and plaster; roof coverings of pan and cover tile, glass tile, and composition roofing; steel sash; wood sash and doors; and plumbing and electric lighting systems. Drawings and Specification No. 4300 may be obtained on application to the Bureau, to the Commandant, Twelfth Naval District, Sheldon Building, San Francisco, Calif., or to the Public Works Officer, U.S.N., Timken Building, San Diego, Calif. Deposit of a check or postal money order for \$30, payable to the Chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks, is required as security for the safe return of the drawings and specification. C. W. PARKS, Chief of Bureau. September 4, 1920.

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The general contractors awarded the construction contract Nov. 22, 1920, were "W. E. Kier and E. L. Kier, copartners doing business under the firm name of W. E. Kier Construction Company, having an office and place of business in the First National Bank Building, San Diego, and Wm. Simpson Construction Company, having an office and place of business at 526 Marsh-Strong Building, Los Angeles." The majority of their subcontractors were from Los Angeles: The American System of [concrete] Reinforcing; Globe Electric Co.; Merritt Plumbing; Otis Elevator Co.; Wm. Smith Cast Stone Co.; and Southwest Onyx and Marble Co. (Kier and Kier had won the contract for building the Naval Air Station Administration Bldg. in June 1919.)

Original cost of the Administration Building was estimated to be \$193,659 out of the \$718,217 contract for the first six hospital buildings.

4. Documents Concerning Original Construction:

A set of paper prints of the original construction drawings are in the Hospital Public Works Office; microfiche negatives of the same paper prints are in the Navy Public Works Center (22nd Street) Plan Files Room; and another set of the same paper prints, plus subcontractors' working drawings, in the Laguna Niguel National Archives. A bound copy of the original contract (No. 4300) is in the Suitland National Archives. It includes the same paper prints of the original construction drawings.

Photographs of successive stages in construction are in the Washington D.C. National Archives, Still Photographs Branch.

The photo-data section of this documentation package contains photographs of original construction drawings and the field file contains photographs of stages in construction.

5. Alterations and Additions:

<u>Contract Number</u>	<u>Job Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
N3	Retaining walls on west side	1920
4300-Y	Revised pipe trenches between buildings	1921
N2	Revised road in front	1922
4595	Lighting fixtures	1922
4955	Lighting fixtures	1924
5328	New steps for west entrance	1926
5325	Alter south wing interior	1927
5327	Waterproof exterior walls	1927
5917	Install file room in basement	1929
6381	Install cabinets in dispensary	1931
6736	Repair parapets (waterproofing)	1932

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<u>Contract Number</u>	<u>Job Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
N3	Alter basement	1942
N4412	Replace lighting fixtures	1942
N3	Repair stucco on towers	1945
19307	Remodel 2nd floor personnel office	1948
20435	Acoustical tile ceilings	1948
20971	Alter steps to west entrance	1948
25892	Replace lighting fixtures w/fluorescent	1952
35112	Replace elevators	1953

The Administration Building remains little changed from its original appearance. The main tendencies have been to improve the level of interior illumination, to cover the original stucco coat with impervious materials that change its texture and color, and, to extend the main entry's decorative terrace and stairway to the west.

By contrast, the ward buildings interiors were changed more extensively as to floor plans and uses. Also by contrast, the other buildings required little or no additional waterproofing.

B. Historical Context:

The Hospital Complex is one of four architecturally-important facilities the Navy built in the course of establishing San Diego as a Naval Operating Base in the 1920's.

The accompanying narrative report gives a detailed account of the events leading to the construction of the Hospital complex.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. The Administration Building is the focal point of the Hospital group. The Hospital buildings are arranged in rows with uniform facade heights in accord with Beaux Arts precepts. The Administration Building's facade, however, projects forward and upward, through the plane of those uniform facades, to form the central emphasis for the group.

Yet other than the features added onto its western facade, its architectural character is fundamentally the same as the other buildings of the group. Although its twin towers give it cathedral-like lines, its facade is more decorative than expressing corresponding "mission" spaces within. The north tower contains a stairwell and the south tower contains an elevator. The office-building floor plan within does not carry out any cathedral-like plan.

Therefore this Outline Report applies to the design and structural characteristics of all the other major buildings of the complex as well. The National Park Service observed that commonality among the major buildings by saying that because "their construction type and detailing are similar to those of the Administration Building, we will not require Outlines for the remaining buildings within the complex, as they would be essentially repetitious."

2. Condition of Fabric:

The building is structurally sound. The electrical and mechanical systems have been to some extent upgraded since new. The original exterior has been well maintained, but maintained with no eye to historic preservation. The several layers of waterproofing paint have coated over the texture, color, and less prominent details of the original stucco. Current (1985) repainting is covering pale pink by a pale cream with details picked out with a terra-cotta hue. The basement and the walkway column blocks are in gray, perhaps to resemble exposed concrete. The cast stone and exposed copper decorations, for the most part, have not been painted over. The original interior has been gradually obscured by the encrusting accumulation of minor partition alterations, dropped ceilings, and floors. The trend toward institutional drabness has been offset to some extent by the maturing landscaping.

B. Description

1. The dimensions of the building's rectangular plan are given in the photos of the original construction drawings. The central section has a basement, four stories of offices, plus a pent-house solarium on the roof. The flanking sections have a basement and three stories. The flanking sections have three bay widths as does the central section between the towers.
2. The perimeter foundation is reinforced concrete. It has a water table at the first floor level.
3. The exterior walls are formed by hollow tile block laid into the reinforced concrete skeleton, all of which was stuccoed. Please see Field File photos of construction in progress.
4. The structural system is a reinforced concrete skeleton frame with reinforced concrete columns, beams, and floor slabs. The construction contract specified in great detail how concrete was to be formed, reinforced, poured, and finished.

The forms were tongued grooved dressed and oiled lumber. The forms had corner inserts to chamfer exposed corners. Although most of the surfaces were to be stuccoed, the surfaces to remain exposed were stripped when green and trowelled and rubbed with cement mortar grout.

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The reinforcing was a patent system (the American System of Reinforcing) using square and twisted square steel rods. The concrete mixture for common flatwork (1 part Portland cement, 3 parts sand, and 6 parts broken stone or gravel) was enriched to 1 to 2 1/2 to 5 sidewalks, and to 1 to 2 to 4 for reinforced areas such as the columns and beams.

Navy architects showed great interest in concrete toppings. The sidewalks got an inch thick layer of 1 part cement to 2 parts sand. The Administration Building stairsteps received 1 part cement to 2 parts fine crushed stone. Onto floor slabs, already damp-proofed with hydrated lime, they floated a 1 to 3 mixture to form a "composition" finish.

Concrete was poured by laborers who pushed wheeled hoppers filled from the larger hoppers that had been lifted from a power-driven mixer by a crane.

Hollow tile blocks infilled the frame to form the exterior walls. These walls made some contribution to structural strength. The contract called for 12 inch high by 12 inch wide terra-cotta blocks but the bidder here reserved the right to use different dimensions and a brand called Heath tiles. (Earlier Navy correspondence refers to the San Diego Terra Cotta works.) The blocks were laid in lime cement mortar wedged along the top. Common bricks were allowable in arches.

The hip-roofed portions had timber roof framing.

5. The main entrance portico is the most prominent porch. It has three equal-sized arches, the center one being decorated with a Renaissance style arched pedimental element that breaks the flat parapet line above, and a flat roof unseen behind the parapet. This portico's concrete floor appears original, although there may be tiles under. On the east side there are two pavillions with arched openings directly behind the front towers. They are unobtrusive because they form no more than wide spots in the walkway. The remainder of the covered walkway, also on the east, may also be mentioned as a porch. The east sidewalk has the original concrete slabs covering pipe trenches.
6. The building has no chimneys. It receives steam heat and hot water from the central steam plant.
7. Openings:
 - (a) Front entrance doors are wood glazed with wood frames having multi-paned side lights and transoms above. Rear doors are similar but without side lights.
 - (b) Windows are 4 by 4 pane wood sash double hung. The main floor has transoms over, the other 3 floors do not.

8. Roof:

(a) The flat portions are hot-mopped. The flat portions intended as a walkway to the solarium had a concrete tile surface.

(b) The hip-roofed portions and the towers are clad in terra-cotta pan and cover tiles, approximately 7 1/2 by 18 inches, laid on wood strips and felt.

(c) The only notable roof feature is the towers' octagonal shape with alternating rectangular and arched openings. The towers have tiny decorative balconies. The towers have no eave overhangs and the hipped roofs have only slight eave projections. The sheet metal gutters and downspouts have no notable features. The tile roof has no ventilators or other projections.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Sketch plans are given here in lieu of verbal descriptions of the floor plans.
2. The stairways are steel with bar uprights supporting the rail, probably standard commercial units, as shown in the 1985 photographs.
3. The one notable floor covering is the marble in the entrance foyer.
4. Walls are painted and ceilings are acoustical panels with built-in illumination in some areas. The foyer's woodwork is painted over, the coffered ceiling has acoustical tiles, and the original lighting fixtures have been replaced.
5. The interior has few notable doors or window openings. Please see 1985 photograph of fan-light over door to the mail room on first floor.
6. The interior has little in the way of decorative features or trim.

7. The contractor identified the following hardware and fixture suppliers:

Sidewalk vault glass	American Luxfer Prism Co.
Signal (call bell) system	Chicago Signal Co.
Plumbing fixtures	John Douglas Co. (Cincinnati)
Linoleum	Armstrong Cork Co. (Lancaster, PA)
Composition flooring and stair treads	Special Service Flooring Corp.
Hardware	Russell Irwin Mfg.

8. Mechanical equipment serves office functions only. The heating steam and hot water are supplied from the central plant. In addition to ordinary 120/240 electrical equipment, the building has one elevator. The building originally had bathrooms adequate for a dormitory on an upper floor.
9. Little of the government-issue office furniture is original to the building.

D. Site:

1. The accompanying narrative report discusses the Balboa Park setting of the Hospital complex and the north-south orientation of the complex on Inspiration Point. This Administration Building is visually and symbolically the formal entrance to the Hospital complex, but patients' admissions actually occur in other buildings closer to the Balboa Park gate. It is, however, the center of the administrative hierarchy.
2. The original site design for the Administration Building was part of the design for the first six Hospital buildings. The first construction contract entailed grading a small amount of earth from along the top of a natural ridge to create a pad for the first group of buildings, and then filling the area to the west of the building pad to build an entrance road at approximately the same level as the buildings. Turnoffs from that entrance road then allowed cars to drive east around each end of the Administration Building, into and out of the central court behind the building.

The original 1920 plan shows a different layout for the way the road looped into and out of the court, as opposed to the 1922 plan which was used for construction. The latter is a simple horseshoe drive following the perimeter of the court. The first central fountain was installed at that time. The original plans for the Administration Building and the Courtyard did not show landscaping. They mentioned only that the Navy would designate certain existing trees to be protected during construction.

In the earliest original drawings the entry road (now Stitt Avenue) did not extend beyond the first group of buildings, i.e. no farther south than Ward B, Building 5. The street tree planting extended only that far.

The original plan did not have any impressive stairway descending westward from the entrance of the Administration Building. Subsequent minor construction projects built out the entrance axis into the formal plan we see today.

A covered walkway ran along the east side of the building and around the central court, bridging over the entry drives separating this building from the adjacent ward buildings. There were no formal ports cocheres where the walkway crossed the entry drives, and only a canopy for ambulance deliveries at the front of the Operating Building. The walkway in the original 1920 design had a promenade tile floor and pipe trenches under. The walkways and pipe trenches were modified in March 1921 drawings by W.P., E.P.G., and E.G.L.

3. The Administration Building has no outbuildings. A pergola-like framework on the east side supports a ship's bell. (The Hospital used the first bell many years until it was placed back in service on a ship and then another bell was procured from the Navy's inventory of bells from deactivated ships.)

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Photographs of the original construction drawings are included in the accompanying photo-data set. The sources are given in Part I item 4.
- B. Early photographs of the building under construction and in use are included in the accompanying Field Records. The sources are the Washington National Archives and the San Diego Historical Society.
- C. This report was not based on interviews.
- D. The narrative report contains a bibliography.
- E. We are not aware of other likely sources of information.